



## THE NEED OF SMARTNESS IN PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

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**Abstract.** The fast changing environment, complex problems and increased expectations for government performance establishes new requirements for the public governance system. A key challenge for the government is to find new ways of operation and collaboration in order to achieve sustainable growth effectively and efficiently ensuring public sector integrity and building trust in government. Consequently, the interest in desired characteristics of the exercise of public authority and management processes i.e. smart public governance has increased considerably. The aim of this article is to identify the main dimensions of smartness in public governance based on the review of recent attempts to improve public governance in developed and developing countries using the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Reviews.

**Keywords:** smartness dimensions, public governance, public governance reforms.

**JEL classification:** Z19.

### 1. Introduction

Countries' society and economy are facing a number of major challenges. Powerful changes related to demographics, globalization, environmental concerns, societal relationships, social stability and technology affect every government. More precisely dwindling social cohesion, distrust of traditional institutions, insecurity in financial markets, demographic transitions and migration, globalisation put pressure for the reformation of social welfare systems and the need for sustainable productivity growth. These are the challenges currently faced by the developed and developing countries across the globe.

Meeting these challenges requires smart mode of governance; because traditional system has failed or there are serious doubts regarding its adequacy for solving today's problems. A mode of governance is considered 'smart' when it is conducive to timely and effective collective problem-solving under conditions of high problem complexity and contextual uncertainty and volatility. Policy and management strategies must be substantively valuable to the citizenry, politically legitimate, feasible and sustainable, and operationally possible and practical (O'Flynn 2007).

The aim of this article is to identify the main dimensions of smartness in public governance based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Reviews of

recent attempts to improve public governance in developed and developing countries.

The first section of the article outlines the conditions under which governments operate and the challenges they face. The second section presents main trends of public governance reforms based on the case analysis presented in OECD Reviews. The last section discusses smartness dimensions of public governance. The conclusions are presented at the end of the article.

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### 2. Instability and complexity of public governance environment

In the twenty first century governments all over the world are facing with the same global pressures and public governance challenges. In a world characterized by predominance of complexity and uncertainty (Tollefson *et al.* 2012), growing number of “wicked issues” (Sorensen, Tofling 2012; Bovaird, Loffler 2003), globalization (multilevel policy arena) and transformation of industry society into knowledge society (Willke 2009), rapid social change (an ageing population, high levels of unemployment as a result of the global financial and economic crisis) (Farrell, Goodman 2013),

and technological innovation, citizens expectations of what government ought to deliver are rising.

Citizens are demanding better and more individualized public solutions and services, but these demands cannot be meeting by spending more public money (Sorensen, Tofling 2012) and governments must do more, with less. Furthermore, public trust in government is eroding (Bouckaert 2012) and against this back-drop, governments must not only do more with less, but they must do so in highly visible ways, in order to regain the faith of their constituents.

A number of 'wicked issues' are pushing themselves higher on policy agendas. Wicked issues are thought of as the most challenging form of multi-dimensional cross-cutting horizontal problems that do not fit the ministerial boxes into which governments, and policy analysts, tend to place policies (Peters 1998: 296) and so require very broad, inter-connected responses from governments, and where the nature of the problem itself is in dispute (Government for the Future 2013).

The fast changing governance environment, with its many interconnections, multi-faceted, increasingly complex and politically sensitive problems and cross-sector boundaries poses new requirements to the public governance. Traditional forms of government had become ineffective and new initiatives must be taken to overcome the challenges of uncertainty and complexity (Pollitt, Bouckaert 2011; Christensen, Lagreid 2007). The traditional and historical role of state and government has changed, causing a major alteration in the nature of public governance. So a key challenge for the government is to find new ways of operation and collaboration in order to achieve sustainable growth effectively and efficiently ensuring public sector integrity and building trust in government.

### **3. Main trends of public governance reforms in countries**

OECD Reviews provide governments with a 360° perspective on their performance, and where this needs to be improved, in order to strengthen a country's potential for sustainable growth and to improve the well-being of its citizens. Thus they become a great tool to determine main trends of the public governance reforms.

Summarising the result of the reviews analysis it can be stated that all governments seek for the same goal – efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness in addressing socio-economic challenges (OECD 2013, 2013c, 2012) so countries earlier or later get involved in similar type re-

forms. An effective government is one which creates outputs, namely the delivery of public services or the design and implementation of public policies that meet their intended objectives. At the same time, an efficient government is one which produces these outputs at the lowest cost, using the minimum necessary resources (OECD 2011a). Governments must operate proactively looking to identify the next wave of challenges on the horizon in order to find existing and potential new solutions to address them, drawing from experiences both inside and outside of country (OECD 2013c, 2012b, 2010). Governments seek to restore public trust and ability to guide country by strengthening public sector integrity and transparency (OECD 2013a, 2013b, 2012).

Respectively complexity of the governance reforms depends on the capacities of government. For example, reforms for the establishment of policy-making capacities, public finance and human resource management and the rule of law were implemented in Middle East and North Africa region (OECD 2010a). These reforms included improved legislative drafting capacities; strengthening performance-oriented policies and processes, adopting a medium-term expenditure framework and a programme structure for the expenditures budget; using a performance budgeting framework for designing and carrying out improvements in service delivery and targeting; increasing government capacity for strategic human resource management; fighting corruption; administrative simplification, ICT use (OECD 2010a).

In more developed countries the governance capacities are further developed promoting a whole-of-government approach (OECD 2011, 2011a, 2010) by focus on horizontal relationships between levels of government and with citizens and businesses (OECD 2010) building social dialogue in public management (OECD 2012b). Horizontality requires an enhanced central governmental organization (OECD 2012a), the streamline regulations applicable to government operations (OECD 2011a, 2012a, 2012b), a "fit for purpose" machinery of government and motivated workforce (OECD 2012a, 2012b, 2011a). Networked relations are developed for building a common agenda (OECD 2011), collective commitment (OECD 2012) and promoting a culture of co-operation and collaboration (OECD 2012b). The focus on achieving the results (OECD 2012b, 2008) through integrated strategic planning and budgeting (OECD 2012b) and whole-of-government information management (OECD 2013) leads to the strategic resources management (OECD 2013, 2012), risk management and value for money (OECD 2012). The impact of

e-government policies (OECD 2011a, 2010) is exploited primarily for modernised service delivery (innovations, user satisfaction and ICT's use) (OECD 2012a, 2011, 2010). The transparency and integrity is built by anti-corruption framework involving key stakeholders, including civil society and business and anti-corruption tools (OECD 2013a, 2013b, 2012). Integrity is seen as tool for continuous policy learning and adjustment (OECD 2012).

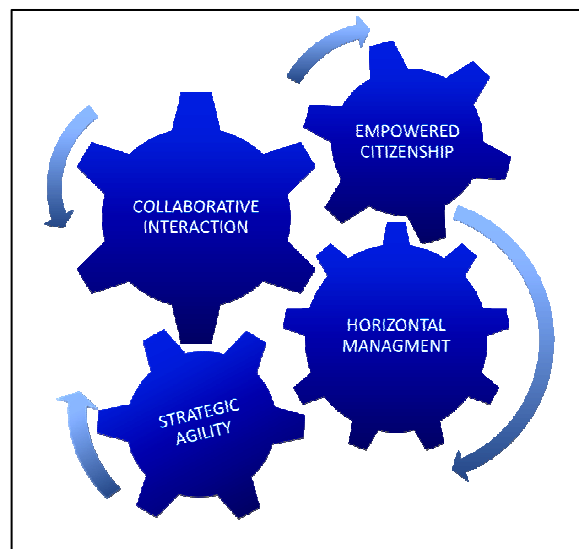
Despite the efforts to reform public governance systems capacities of many governments are not sufficient to operate under present conditions. Public governance reforms show that still there are some concerns about the functions and machinery of government. The defragmented relation of executives and parliament leads to the deficit of leadership and accountability inside and outside the government. Legal formalism domination reduces flexibility and innovation which needs space and encouragement. The lack of visibility and fuzziness of the Centre of Government (CoG), neglected minister-civil servant relationship as well as unclear strategic goals and weak linkages with budgets, poor communication leads to poor policy implementation. Integrity issues are relevant not just for emerging states. Thus main focus in public governance development remains the strategic vision and agility, leadership and stewardship from the centre, institutional strength and networking, enabled participation, integrity and transparency, effective processes and implementation in support of real outcomes and impact for the economy and society leading to long-term countries' growth, cohesion, competitiveness and prosperity. Analysis results indicate no single model is at all likely to 'solve' the challenges in all countries and lead to intended well-being results. Even if governments' aspirations may be roughly similar, solutions will need to take account of the particular contexts and governmental capacities. Since it cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach it is better to rely on the insights defining key interconnected points in a highly abbreviated form rather than seek to develop public governance reform programme.

#### **4. Smartness dimensions in public governance**

Governments need an appropriate system encompassing structures and mechanisms established so that the different stakeholders can work cohesively together to meet existing and emerging challenges. Public governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government, identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and eco-

nomical issues, identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action, is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors, and recognizes the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority (Stoker 1998:18). A mode of public governance is considered 'smart' when it is conducive to timely and effective collective problem-solving under conditions of high problem complexity and contextual uncertainty and volatility. The smartness in public governance is built into the system and flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from structures and processes. The smartness in public governance is an expression of a new means of government activity, policy-making, and service delivery achieved through (Fig. 1):

- empowered citizenship;
- collaborative interaction;
- strategic agility;
- horizontal management.



**Fig. 1.** Dimensions of smartness in public governance

The best management approach to adopt depends on situational factors (Afford, Hughes 2008: 131) ensuring adaptability and flexibility that are the key virtues of smart mode of public governance (Stoker 2006: 49). 'Wicked issues' solving must be negotiated and engage with different constituencies: governments must negotiate up into their authorising environment or the political realm and out toward citizens and business. Smartness in public governance is expressed as flexibility to form such governance structures that will work best in certain circumstances, or to develop relationship form that is most appropriate under certain conditions (O'Flynn 2005a). Such management through networks enhance to be open to learning in different ways, and to draw in dif-

ferent kind of resources from a range of sources' (Stoker 2006:41) by consultation, communication, deliberation.

#### 4.1. Empowered citizenship

Active participation of citizens is increasingly recognized as a driver of value creation and innovation in public sector. According to Lenihan *et al.* (2007) there is a growing awareness that government cannot deal with complex problems alone and that citizens will have to play a larger part in achieving shared public policy goals (e.g. public health, climate change). In order to achieve these goals for governments it is not enough only to inform citizens or consult with them. Governments and citizens relation must be based on partnership, in which citizens actively engage in the policy-making process (OECD 2001). Glor (2005) define two approaches to empowering citizens in public governance. Firstly, citizens are taking the initiative in assuming responsibility for government. The citizen-government dialogue chose to adopt an unusual perspective, that the citizen is responsible for her/his government, that is, that the persons responsible for government are not elected officials or public servants, but citizens themselves. Secondly, citizens, not stakeholders, are participating in policy formulation at the invitation of government. The key to such participation is whether the policies recommended by the participants are accepted; that is, whether power is actually shared.

Empowered citizenship means to include as wide a variety of citizens' voices into the policy-making process as possible. This leads to collaborative citizenship that tends to replace the liberal notion of citizenship that conceives the citizen as a passive bearer of legal rights (Torfing, Triantafyllou 2013:15). Very important is to create new ways for citizens to make their voices heard and give them the ability to provide input into regulation, budgets and the provision of services (Willke 2009). According to OECD (2009) in practice it could be done in two ways:

1. lowering the barriers of entry to participation for people who are willing but unable to participate (the barriers can be socio-economic, cultural, and geographical or another external nature);
2. increasing the appeal of participation for people who are able but unwilling to participate (these people face subjective barriers, such as a low interest in politics, a lack of trust in how their input will be used, or limited personal benefits from participation).

The objective of empowered citizenship is not only to facilitate the self-government of citizens,

but to mobilize private resources, energies and ideas in public governance and enhance its legitimacy (Skelcher, Torfing 2010). Furthermore, citizens can play an important role in the delivery of public services. By engaging and empowering citizens to co-deliver public services, governments can not only better meet citizen's needs; they can also shift some of the burden of accountability from the state to the people, allowing high quality delivery of services (Willke 2009). Citizens' engagement will increasingly be recognized as another lever of governance – and become a part of the standard government toolkit of budgeting, regulatory, e-government and performance management tools.

#### 4.2. Collaborative interaction

Smart public governance entails recalibrating the traditional governance institutions - markets, hierarchies, communities (Jessop 2011) – but also (re)combining elements from these institutions in networked forms. Governments are steadily moving from a model of hierarchical to networked government – used to describe public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors (Edelenbos *et al.* 2013; Klijn, Koppenjan 2012; Klijn *et al.* 2010; Sorensen, Torfing 2009). This model is characterized by multi-organizational, multi-governmental, and multi-sectoral interaction that involves pragmatic and context dependent choices of how to solve public problems through specific combination of hierarchy, market and crosscutting governance networks (Meuleman 2008).

Networked governance is used to capture transformations at all levels of governance towards more interactive, reflexive and communicative forms of coordination and collaboration. The introduction of joined-up government initiatives and the whole-of-government movement are examples of attempts to enhance collaboration and new ways of coordinating (Christensen, Lagreid 2007; 2008; Pollitt 2003). Working horizontally, governments need to consider a number of issues, including (Ling 2002):

- new ways of working across organisations (new forms of relationships between organisations, which involves shared goals and agreeing on governance structures, processes and roles for a partnership);
- new types of organisations (organisations need a culture that values and supports working across boundaries and the capacity to do so, including an appropriate skill set among staff);

- new accountabilities and incentives (performance management systems and accountability structures must support working horizontally. Organisations need to reward horizontal as well as vertical targets);
- new ways of delivering services (with a greater focus on customer service, front of house changes or one-stop shops, joining up can provide a more integrated and responsive service for citizens).

The term collaborative interaction is associated with a desire to ensure the horizontal and vertical co-ordination of government activity in order to improve policy coherence, better use resources, promote and capitalize on synergies and innovation that arise from a multi-stakeholder perspective, and provide seamless service delivery to citizens and businesses. The immediate goal of collaboration is to exchange and pool public and private resources through negotiated interactions, facilitated learning and the building of joint ownership to new solutions. Collaboration not competition is the main source for innovative solutions (Sorensen, Torfing 2012:9). It requires government bodies, regardless of type or level, to work across portfolio boundaries to achieve shared goals and to provide integrated government responses to policy issues (OECD 2011). A capacity to genuinely collaborate fundamentally enables a public administration to be more responsive to the needs of government and citizens.

Public governance system should allow individuals, groups, and corporate actors to undertake effective collective action. This collaboration is based on partnership involving multiple agencies (within and across borders of public sector) and transnational organizations. Collaboration requires enhanced intensified multi-directional communications and connectedness among growing numbers and types of public organizations and agencies, other private and third sector entities across multiple dimensions.

### 4.3. Strategic agility

Faced with fast-changing economic and societal pressures, governments need to proactively respond to complex policy issues. According to the definition provided by Doz and Kosonen (2008) strategic agility – the government's ability to proactively anticipate and flexibly respond to increasingly complex policy challenges so as to avoid crises and carry out strategic and structural changes in an orderly and timely manner. Strategic agility is about taking decisive action where necessary, as coherently as possible and in line with existing

priorities and constraints. It requires institutional and procedural frameworks to enable fast and quality decisions, and to ensure their effective implementation in order to generate public value (OECD 2010).

Based on experience of Scandinavian countries as well as discussions in the scientific literature (OECD 2010; OECD 2012c; Hämäläinen *et al.* 2012) several important characteristics of strategic agility can be distilled and highlighted:

- firstly, the competence of strategic sensitivity and insight is seen as extremely important in order to recognize emerging environmental and societal trends and develop a vision to respond to the challenges. The ability to frame strategic issues in a fresh and insightful way and to lead high quality dialogue with internal and external key stakeholders is imperative. High-quality analysis and advice, ensuring that longer-term needs and perspectives are taken into account, must be provided as well;
- secondly, wicked problems and therefore cross-functional agenda require collective action and leadership focus ensuring the greatest responsiveness to the issue at hand. Achieving collective commitment and system-wide coordination requires shared incentives and a common agenda. Civil servants therefore need to understand the grounds and essence of improvements;
- furthermore, in these fast-changing times resources (budgetary in particular) and allocations should be closely tied to the government's strategic objectives ensuring effective reallocation of resources quickly and flexibly from one priority to another to meet new opportunities and challenges. Fostering mobility (personnel rotation for building collective commitment) of people in civil service is equally important as reallocating financial resources.

Strategic agility leads to strategic-state capability – a set of central government institutions that are able to set, steer and operationalize national long-term vision-based strategy to achieve prosperity for all efficiently and effectively. Identify and address internal and external challenges implementing strategy through evidence-based decision making and foresight, efficiency of regulation and service delivery, mobilise actors and leverage resources to achieve integrated and coherent outcomes (OECD 2013, 2013c).

#### 4.4. Horizontal management

The nature and substance of the issues requires horizontality in its' solving – adequate governance processes and tools to achieve integrated outcome and impact. Horizontal policy making (*'joining-up'*) includes improving the integration of policy making with resource allocation, improving the systematic use of evidence in policy making and promoting innovation and building learning capacity (Government for the Future 2013). Horizontal management leads to management of relationships achieving multiple goals: achievement of performance targets, steering networks of providers, creating and maintaining trust, and responding to the collective preferences of the citizenry in addition to those of clients' i.e. narrower service objectives, broader outcomes, and the creation and maintenance of trust and legitimacy (O'Flynn 2007).

Horizontal co-ordination requires political and administrative leaders' engagement and commitment. Public leaders play an active role in steering networks of deliberation and service delivery and maintain the overall capacity of the system (Stoker 2006:44). The perspective is based on the assumption that political and administrative leaders use working groups as an instrument to get government organizations to work better together (Christensen, Lagreid 2007:1061). Thus public officials engage political authority, collaborate with each other within and across institutional boundaries, manage efficiently and effectively, engage with communities and users of services and reflectively develop their own sense of vocation and public duty (Smith 2004:69–70).

The CoGs are seen as intensely political environments which are connected to the powerful political currents flowing through government centres and tailored to fit the particular circumstances of each government (Government for the Future 2013). CoG structure and processes ensures overall capacity to identify gaps, contradictions and weaknesses. As these three cross-cutting issues are closely inter-related also tend to be interconnected. Policies arise organically from a series of discrete actions to tackle a specific problem as an imprecise, "hairy" vision and resilient goals, combining a commonality of purpose with operational freedom to find solutions (OECD 2013c). Policies comes from the menu of alternatives selected pragmatically and a reflexive approach to intervention mechanisms to achieve outputs are used (Stoker 2006:44).

Varying budgeting procedures and supportive budgeting mechanisms must be used to foster budgeting agility meeting short-term (to shrink budget deficit and curb government debt) and

long-term (create fiscal space for strategic changes in policy, new policy initiatives and accommodation of increasing demands of society) challenges (Hawkesworth, Klepsvik 2013). Governments face a wide range of strategic, operational and financial risks which may prevent them from achieving their objectives. Risk management is a systematic approach to identifying, evaluating and responding to risks and providing assurance that responses are effective.

The focus is on evidence based approach (Stoker 2006:49); however this focus leads to evidence-informed policy rather than evidence-based policy, as ex-ante evidence-based thinking is difficult to apply in a context of uncertainty (OECD 2013c). The systematic use of assessment and monitoring procedures as reflexivity aims to integrate knowledge into policy making.

Integrated service delivery is the process of bringing, and fitting, together government services in order to provide seamless services to citizens (Kernaghan 2005). Integrated service delivery arrangement aims to ensure one-stop access to services through coordination. Greater focus on customer service, one-stop shops, joining up can provide a more integrated and responsive service for citizens (Ling 2002).

#### 5. Conclusions

Governments are facing with many new complex challenges in the dynamic environment and the traditional mode of government had become ineffective. Furthermore, citizens' expectations of what and how government ought to deliver are rising and governments must do more with less. Governments must restore and maintain the trust of citizens. All governments seek for the same goal – efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness in addressing socio-economic challenges. The main focus in public governance development remains the strategic vision and agility, promoting a whole-of-government approach, leadership and stewardship from the centre, institutional strength and networking, enabled participation, integrity and transparency.

Meeting all these challenges requires smart mode of governance enabling governments operate fruitfully tackling with the wicked issues by timely and flexible action in fastly changing conditions. Since it cannot follow a one-size-fits-all approach it is better to rely on the insights defining key interconnected dimensions of smartness in public governance: empowered citizenship, collaborative interaction, strategic agility, horizontal management. There is a significant task to enhance public governance – based on the principles of participa-

tion, cooperation, and collaboration – by the dimensions of smartness. Depending on the context of each country and its government's capacities the level of manifestation of each of these dimensions are different, but overall presence is necessary in order to achieve smartness in public governance. Smart mode of public governance is induced more by the necessity rather than voluntary choice of governments.

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